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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

January 8, 1998

United Way of Northwest Louisiana

The Honorable William Kennard  
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission  
1919 M Street NW  
Washington, DC 20554

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

CC DK + No. 97-23/

Dear Chairman Kennard:

BellSouth has recently filed an application with the Federal Communications Commission to enter the long-distance market in Louisiana. I am writing on behalf of the non-profit organizations that serve thousands of clients in northwest Louisiana, many of whom live in some of the most rural areas of the state. I recommend you approve BellSouth's request without hesitation.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 should have resulted in true competition for local and long-distance services; however, that is not the case. Instead, existing long-distance providers have had the luxury of choosing the areas they serve. None have opted to compete for local residential telecommunications services, particularly in the rural areas where there are a large percentage of small businesses and fixed-income households. As a result, they are not able to receive the benefits of competition.

I believe that BellSouth's entry into the long-distance market will encourage the long-distance carriers to compete for local residential service. This competition will result in lower prices, innovative products, and packaging of services. In addition, customers may finally be able to select one provider for all their telecommunications needs, enabling them to receive a consolidated bill for all their communications services.

New companies entering the market are likely to build their own telecommunications networks, invest money in Louisiana, and entice new businesses to locate here. These new businesses and the jobs they will create will have an enormous positive economic effect on our economy and the donor capacity in our area. This increased capacity will most certainly help those less fortunate in our society.

I encourage you to follow the lead of the Louisiana Public Service Commission and approve BellSouth's application to enter the long-distance market. It is vitally important to the organizations meeting social and community needs in northwest Louisiana.

Sincerely,

Joe Pierce  
Interim Executive Director

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